

Report of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities is an inter-agency body that promotes coordination and cooperation across statistical programmes in regional, supranational and international organizations. As a forum of committed members, it fosters good practices in the statistical activities of international organizations, in accordance with the principles governing international statistical activities, and within the constraints of their own governance arrangements and resource envelopes. The members of the Committee are committed to contributing actively to the development of a coordinated global statistical system that produces and disseminates high-quality statistics, for example by facilitating the development and effective functioning of regional and national statistical systems.

2. The Committee held two sessions in 2018: the thirty-first session, held in New York on 5 March 2018, prior to the forty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission; and the thirty-second session, hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna on 25 and 26 September 2018. Both sessions were chaired by the Co-Chairs of the Committee: the Chief Statistician and Director of Statistics and Data of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Martine Durand, and the Chief of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch of UNODC, Angela Me.

3. The present report provides an overview of the work carried out by the Committee in 2018 and a summary of the main conclusions that it reached at its thirty-first and thirty-second sessions.

II. Membership, leadership and terms of reference

4. The Committee currently has 45 members,¹ 38 of which attended at least one session in 2018.

5. In addition to the two Co-Chairs, the work of the Committee is also supported by three Vice-Chairs: the Director General of Eurostat, Mariana Kotzeva, the Director of the African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa, Oliver Chinganya, and the Director General of the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, Sabir Al Harbi.

III. Working methods

6. In addition to holding two annual sessions, the Committee operates actively between sessions through a network of task teams, following up on the decisions taken during the regular sessions. The teams choose their own working arrangements and hold their own meetings, as appropriate. They prepare documents on progress made and the results of their work and report to the Committee for decision-making at its regular sessions. As the secretariat of the Committee, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat works closely with the Bureau, facilitates communication among Committee members and prepares the

¹ See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/members.htm>.

reports of the regular sessions and the annual report to the Statistical Commission; it also maintains the web page of the Committee on the Division website.²

7. Since the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, the Committee has developed joint statements on items on the agenda of the Commission that are important to the Committee. Such statements must receive strong support from Committee members in order to serve as a mandate for the Co-Chairs to speak on behalf of the Committee. As in recent years, the first session of the year (the thirty-first session of the Committee), which was held on the margins of the Statistical Commission session in March 2018, was largely devoted to finalizing the Committee's joint statements, which were delivered by the Co-Chairs at the forty-ninth session of the Commission, in 2018.³ The Committee is also planning to deliver joint statements at the fiftieth session of the Commission.

8. The Committee has developed a multi-year work programme based on the results of a survey conducted on priority topics for coordination and/or sharing of experiences among members. The Committee is committed to translating work areas and discussions into specific outputs (publications, papers and websites) in order to increase the impact and visibility of its work.

IV. Work of the Committee in 2018

A. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

9. Issues surrounding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have been on the agenda of the Committee at every session since its twentieth, which was held in Frankfurt, Germany, during the fourth quarter of 2012.

10. The Committee continued to receive regular briefings from the Statistics Division on the further development of the indicator framework for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals, in view of the critical supporting role of international organizations as custodians of indicators in their respective areas of work and in view of their respective mandates in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In 2017, the Committee had developed and transmitted to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators a document outlining the guiding principles of data reporting and data sharing for the global monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (version 1) (see also E/CN.3/2018/2, para. 17). Through that document, Committee members had indicated their commitment to achieving the highest statistical standards in reporting on the Goals, in particular with regard to accuracy, comparability and transparency, and to discussing with national authorities any concerns that a country may have within the framework of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the principles governing international statistical activities. The document was welcomed by the Statistical Commission in March 2018 as an initial step to improve coordination and harmonization and to ensure transparency (see Commission decision 49/101 (f)).

11. Subsequently, the Co-Chairs of the Committee engaged in extensive negotiations (jointly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization) with a subgroup of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to finalize together the criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data

² http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accesub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm.

³ In 2018, joint statements were delivered under the following agenda items: 3 (a), "Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2 statements); 3 (b), "Handbook of Statistical Organization"; and 3 (d), "Household surveys".

flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals submitted to the Commission by the Group in March 2018. The negotiation process resulted in the document containing the criteria. That document was endorsed by the Committee at its thirty-second session and subsequently by the Group, with minor changes, at its meeting held in Stockholm from 5 to 8 November 2018 and has been presented to the Commission by the Group (see E/CN.3/2019/2, sect. II.B and annex I).

12. Given the crucial importance of population data in computing many Sustainable Development Goal indicators, the Committee formed a task team to review the use of population data for the global monitoring of the Goals, as such data are one of the main sources of differences between Goal indicators published by custodian agencies and national indicators. The task team will assess the best practices in choosing the most appropriate population data for calculating Goal indicators and for producing regional and global aggregates. The task team will submit a preliminary report to the Committee prior to its next session, in early 2019. The task team consists of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNICEF, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and UNFPA and is led by UNDP.

13. The Committee continues to address issues related to country consultations for the global monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular how to conduct the consultation in a cost-effective, inclusive, informative and transparent way. The Committee will consider this topic at its 2019 sessions.

14. The Committee also regularly discusses the role of regional commissions in Sustainable Development Goal monitoring.

15. The Committee also continued to be briefed on the work of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

B. Capacity development and training

16. The Committee continues to share experiences in important areas. In 2018, the Committee held a panel discussion on the topic of capacity development and training. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, the World Bank and the Statistics Division informed the Committee of recent development in this area. The Partnership presented its work on a feasibility study towards the creation of a global fund for data for development, the World Bank presented its activities regarding various funding mechanisms for the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Division informed the Committee on the work on financing by the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee exchanged views on issues regarding funding for statistical development.

17. The Committee presents on its website materials and tools for strengthening training and human resources development among national and international statistical agencies. The information set out on the website is based on early initiatives to coordinate training activities within the Committee.⁴ The Committee continues to be involved in matters of statistical training and supports the establishment of a global network of regional training centres (see E/CN.3/2017/28, E/CN.3/2018/3 and E/CN.3/2019/3).

⁴ See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/ccsa_training/ccsa_training_resources.htm.

C. Peer reviews of international statistical programmes

18. At the Committee's thirty-second session, UNODC presented the professional peer review of the UNODC research function carried out in 2017 and 2018 with the Statistics Division as part of the review team. In this context, the importance of the United Nations Statistics Quality Assurance Framework, developed by the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System, was emphasized. The Committee also recalled the survey on the implementation of the principles governing international statistical activities conducted in 2014.⁵

19. Consequently, the Committee decided to look further into the possibility of creating a peer review mechanism. The Committee welcomed the offer of UNODC to draft a brief concept note for the upcoming session of the Committee. In 2019, the Committee will also decide whether to repeat the survey on the implementation of the principles to assess the progress made by Committee members in this respect since 2014.

D. Open data policies

20. The Committee held initial discussions on open data policies at its thirtieth session and decided to establish a task team, led by the World Bank, that would, inter alia, conduct a survey among Committee members regarding their current open data practices. At its thirty-second session, in September 2018, the Committee discussed the results of the task team's assessment of Committee members' use of open data practices.

21. The Committee requested the task team to document existing practices, to further reflect on how experiences with open data can be shared both among members and publicly. It also requested the task team to link its work to existing work and to develop an aspirational target for open data policies for Committee members. The task team also agreed to draft a public statement on such a target before the upcoming session. The Committee will again consider the topic of open data policies at its 2019 sessions to review the progress of the task team and to decide when to repeat the assessment.

E. Geospatial information for statistics

22. The Committee organized a special session on geospatial information for statistics, which provided an opportunity for members to share their activities on the uses of geospatial information systems. The session featured a wide variety of presentations by the Statistics Division, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, UNODC, ESCAP and FAO.

23. The Committee decided to conduct a stocktaking exercise to identify in each application area (e.g. sampling design and area frames; land cover/land-use mapping; validation of survey data; disaggregation of national data; data dissemination) the reference data sets and tools being used, how data are being disseminated, and experiences in capacity-building activities and in building partnerships. The exercise should describe the current situation but also be forward-looking and assess challenges, needs and organizations' plans or visions for the use of geospatial information. The results will form the basis for a decision by the Committee on the areas in which it might be useful for Committee members to coordinate and create a

⁵ See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/documents/SA-2014-8-Survey.pdf>.

common platform, including for meaningful engagement with the geospatial community. The Bureau will conduct the member survey and report the results to the Committee at its next session, in March 2019. Task teams could then be created to take the work forward in areas to be decided, based on the survey results.

24. The Committee also agreed to establish contact with the United Nations system network on geospatial information. This will be facilitated by the Statistics Division, which serves as the secretariat of both bodies.

F. Publications by the Committee

26. The Committee publishes on its website various outputs, including the special issue paper entitled "Case studies: using non-official sources in international statistics" (September 2016),⁶ which complements a paper entitled "Recommended practices on the use of non-official sources in international statistics" (November 2013).⁷ Other publications, as well as the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards, are available on the Committee's website,⁸ which is hosted by the Statistics Division.

G. Committee presence at international conferences

27. The Committee organized a special session during the conference of the International Association for Official Statistics held in Paris from 19 to 21 September 2018, on the theme "International statistics: beyond the simple collation of national official statistics". The presentations are available on the Committee website.⁹ The Committee will also organize a special session on geospatial information for international statistics at the International Statistical Institute World Statistics Congress to be held from 18 to 23 August 2019 in Kuala Lumpur.

H. 2019 sessions

28. The Committee agreed that its thirty-third session would be held in New York on 4 March 2019, in conjunction with the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission. The thirty-fourth session will be held in Copenhagen, to be hosted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, during the fourth quarter of 2019.

⁶ Available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accesub/2016docs-28th/E-publication.pdf>.

⁷ Available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accesub-public/practices.pdf>.

⁸ http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accesub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm.

⁹ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ccsa/iaos/2018/>.